

## BIG DIPPER

*Biden's approval dips to lowest of presidency: AP-NORC poll*

President Joe Biden speaks during a reception to celebrate Eid al-Fitr in the East Room of the White House in Washington, May 2, 2022.

Associated Press  
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**LIVE ENTERTAINMENT 7 DAYS A WEEK** PROFESSIONAL COMPLIMENTARY PICTURES ON TUESDAY AND FRIDAY

SUNDAY:	MONDAY:	TUESDAY:	WEDNESDAY:	THURSDAY:	FRIDAY:	SATURDAY:
TICO KOCK STEEL DRUM 4 - 6pm	ANGELA FLORES VIOLINIST 6:30 - 8:30pm	JEAN PAUL SAXOPHONIST 6:30 - 8:30pm	CARLOS ORLATE SINGER 6:30 - 8:30pm	MARRYBELL MADURO SINGER 6:30 - 8:30pm	RICKY THOMAS GUITAR 7 - 9pm	ANGELA FLORES VIOLINIST 6:30 - 8:30pm
MARRYBELL MADURO SINGER 6:30 - 8:30pm	Happy Hour 12 - 1 / 4 - 6 / 9 - 10 *** PREMIUM BRANDS ***		KARAOKE HAPPY HOUR 9:00 - 11:00pm	 		

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Locations: **The Cove Mall** (8:00 AM - 6:00 PM) **Medcare near Courtyard by Marriott** (8:00 AM - 2:00 PM)

## Biden's approval dips to lowest of presidency: AP-NORC poll

From Front

By **NICHOLAS RICCARDI**  
**Associated Press**

President Joe Biden's approval rating dipped to the lowest point of his presidency in May, a new poll shows, with deepening pessimism emerging among members of his own Democratic Party.

Only 39% of U.S. adults approve of Biden's performance as president, according to the poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Research, dipping from already negative ratings a month earlier. Overall, only about 2 in 10 adults say the U.S. is heading in the right direction or the economy is good, both down from about 3 in 10 a month earlier. Those drops were concentrated among Democrats, with just 33% within the president's party saying the country is headed in the right direction, down from 49% in April.

Of particular concern for Biden ahead of the mid-term elections, his approval among Democrats stands at 73%, a substantial drop since earlier in his presidency. In AP-NORC polls conducted in 2021, Biden's approval rating among Democrats never dropped below 82%.

The findings reflect a widespread sense of exasperation in a country facing a cascade of challenges ranging from inflation, gun

violence, and a sudden shortage of baby formula to a persistent pandemic.

"I don't know how much worse it can get," said Milan Ramsey, a 29-year-old high school counselor and Democrat in Santa Monica, California, who with her husband had to move into her parents' house to raise their infant son.

Ramsey thinks the economic dysfunction that's led to her being unable to afford the place where she grew up isn't Biden's fault. But she's alarmed he hasn't implemented ambitious plans for fighting climate change or fixing health care.

"He hasn't delivered on any of the promises. I feel like the stimulus checks came out and that was the last win of his administration," Ramsey said of Biden. "I think he's tired — and I don't blame him, I'd be tired too at his age with the career he's had."

Republicans have not been warm to Biden for a while. Less than 1 in 10 approve of the president or his handling of the economy, but that's no different from last month.

Gerry Toranzo, a nurse and a Republican in Chicago, blames Biden for being forced to pinch pennies by taking steps like driving slower to conserve gas after prices have skyrocketed during his administration.

"His policies are destroying the economy," Toranzo, 46,

said of Biden, blaming him for stopping the Keystone XL fuel pipeline to Canada and hamstringing domestic energy production. "It's a vicious cycle of price increases."

Overall, two-thirds of Americans disapprove of Biden's handling of the economy. That rating is largely unchanged over the last few months, though elevated slightly since the first two months of the year.

But there are signs that the dissatisfaction with Biden on the economy has deepened. Just 18% of Americans say Biden's policies have done more to help than hurt the economy, down slightly from 24% in March. Fifty-one percent say they've done more to hurt than help, while 30% say they haven't made much difference either way.

The percentage of Democrats who say Biden's policies have done more to help dipped from 45% to 37%, though just 18% say they've done more to hurt; 44% say they've made no difference.

Some Democrats blame other forces for inflation. Manuel Morales, an internet service technician in Moline, Illinois, thinks the pandemic and war in Ukraine have had a far bigger impact than Biden's decisions. But the 58-year-old Democrat is now questioning the benefits of



**U.S. military personnel greet President Joe Biden as he arrives at Osan Air Base, Friday, May 20, 2022, in Pyeongtaek, South Korea.**  
**Associated Press**

Biden's biggest legislative achievement, the American Rescue Plan, and its stimulus checks.

"It helped a lot of people, but," Morales said, "people did not want to go back to work."

Morales faults Biden on another area of persistent vulnerability to the president — immigration.

Only 38% back Biden on immigration, and Morales is disappointed at the scenes of migrants continuing to cross the southern border. Though he himself is a Mexican immigrant, Morales thinks the U.S. needs to more stringently control its border to have a hope of legalizing deserving migrants who are in the country illegally.

Also, Morales said, there have to be limits. "It's impossible to bring the whole of Central America and Mexico into this country," he said.

Another area where Morales faults Biden, albeit mildly, is the war with Ukraine. "We are spending a lot of money going to the Ukraine and all that is going to the deficit," Morales said.

Overall, 45% of Americans approve of Biden's handling of the U.S. relationship with Russia, while 54% disapprove. That's held steady each month since the war in Ukraine began. Seventy-three percent of Democrats and 15% of Republicans approve.

The new poll shows just 21% of Americans say they have "a great deal of confidence" in Biden's ability to handle the situation in Ukraine; 39% say they have some confidence and 39% say they have hardly any. Charles Penn, a retired factory worker in Huntington, Indiana, is satisfied with Biden's performance on Ukraine. □



**Former President Donald Trump speaks at a rally at the Delaware County Fairgrounds, April 23, 2022, in Delaware, Ohio.**

**Associated Press**

By **MICHAEL R. SISAK**  
**Associated Press**

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Former President Donald Trump

has paid the \$110,000 in fines he racked up after being held in contempt of court for being slow to re-

## Trump pays \$110K fine, must submit paperwork to end contempt

spond to a civil subpoena issued by New York's attorney general.

Trump paid the fine Thursday but must still submit additional paperwork in order to have the contempt order lifted, the office of Attorney General Letitia James said Friday. A message seeking comment was left Friday with Trump's lawyer.

A Manhattan judge declared Trump in contempt of court on April 25 and fined him \$10,000 per day

for not complying with a subpoena in James' long-running investigation into his business practices.

Judge Arthur Engoron agreed May 11 to lift the contempt order if, by Friday, Trump paid the fines and submitted affidavits detailing efforts to search for the subpoenaed records and explaining his and his company's document retention policies.

Engoron also required a company hired by Trump to aid in the search,

HaystackID, finish going through 17 boxes kept in off-site storage, and for that company to report its findings and turn over any relevant documents. That process was completed Thursday, James' office said. Engoron told Trump to pay the money directly to James' office and for the attorney general to hold the money in an escrow account while Trump's legal team appeals the judge's original contempt finding. □

# Migrants cross border amid legal uncertainty on asylum rule

By ELLIOT SPAGAT

Associated Press

EAGLE PASS, Texas (AP) —

As U.S. officials anxiously waited, many of the migrants crossing the border from Mexico on Friday were oblivious to a pending momentous court ruling on whether to maintain pandemic-related powers that deny a chance to seek asylum on grounds of preventing the spread of COVID-19.

The Justice Department, hoping to avoid last-minute scrambling over the weekend, asked U.S. District Judge Robert Summerhays to decide by Friday whether to keep Title 42 in place while litigation proceeds. The judge in Lafayette, Louisiana, has said he would decide by Monday, when the public health powers are scheduled to expire.

Migrants crossing in Eagle Pass, Texas, knew little or nothing about the rule under which migrants have been expelled more than 1.9 million times since March 2020. They were largely from Cuba, Colombia, Nicaragua and Venezuela — nationalities that have mostly been spared from the asylum ban because high costs, strained diplomatic relations or other considerations make it difficult for the U.S. to fly them home.



Migrants who had crossed the Rio Grande river into the U.S. are under custody of National Guard members as they await the arrival of U.S. Border Patrol agents in Eagle Pass, Texas, Friday, May 20, 2022.

Ana Pinales of the Dominican Republic, who reached Eagle Pass after three years of living illegally in Chile, where she was unable to find steady work, waded across the river before dawn and walked down a dirt road with about 35 Nicaraguans and 25 Cubans, searching for U.S. Border Patrol agents to claim asylum. She walked longer than the rest and met about 15 other migrants waiting under one of Eagle Pass' two bridges to the Mexican border city

of Piedras Negras. After several hours, an agent arrived for them, relieving armed Texas National Guard members who had watched over the group as golfers played on an adjoining riverfront course. "Everyone in the world knows about this route," Pinales, 28, said with a smile, relieved that she was nearly at the end of a two-month journey that took her through Panama's notorious Darien Gap and Mexico, where she was robbed of \$3,000 while bid-

ing her time in a park in the southern city of Tapachula. She said she also frequently paid bribes to get past Mexican military checkpoints.

Title 42 has largely affected people from Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, many of whom have been waiting in Mexican border towns after being denied the right to seek asylum by the U.S. government. Mexico has agreed to accept migrants from those three Central American countries turned back

by the U.S. and last month also started taking in limited numbers of Cubans and Nicaraguans who have been turned away by U.S. authorities.

Nolberto Avila, a small coffee grower who fled threats of violence in Colombia and left his mother and a sibling there to manage the harvests, had never heard of Title 42 in the social media channels that migrants consult to determine whom they can trust and whom and what to avoid. Online chatter directed him to Eagle Pass after he flew to Cancun and took buses to the U.S. border.

"It feels good to be here," said Avila, 30, who spent \$3,000 on airfare and other travel expenses, such as bribes to Mexican soldiers. His ultimate destination is Los Angeles.

A group of about 150 mostly Cuban migrants assembled on Friday a short distance south of the bridge, having swum and walked across the river in smaller groups over several hours since a few hours before dawn.

Border Patrol agents lined them up single file and directed them into vans to go to a processing area. About two-thirds were men, nearly all the rest were women and some were young children. □

Associated Press

## U.S. official: Biden mulls Cuba invitation for Americas summit

By MATTHEW LEE and

CHRIS MEGERIAN

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden is considering inviting a Cuban representative to the Summit of the Americas, a U.S. official said Friday, as his administration tries to salvage an event that risks collapsing over disagreements about the guest list. It's unclear if Cuba would accept the invitation, the U.S. official said, which would be extended to someone in the foreign ministry to join as an observer — but not the foreign minister himself, and not as a full participant.

The U.S. official declined to be identified while speaking about sensitive deliberations. A spokesperson for the National Security Council did not respond to a request for comment about whether Cuba would be invited. The Summit of the Americas involves countries across the Americas, stretching from Canada to Chile. It is scheduled to begin in a little more than two weeks in Los Angeles, in the United States for the first time since the inaugural event in Miami in 1994. But the planning has been marred by confusion, with key leaders like Mexican

President Andrés Manuel López Obrador threatening to skip because Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua weren't expected to be invited.

Chris Dodd, a former U.S. senator from Connecticut chosen by Biden as a special adviser for the summit, spent two hours on Zoom with López Obrador this week.

Jake Sullivan, Biden's national security adviser, told reporters aboard Air Force One on Friday the administration is having "candid and constructive conversations," but declined to say more.



Cuban President Miguel Díaz Canel, right, and his Mexican counterpart Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, left, raise their arms during a ceremony to award the Jose Marti order to President Lopez Obrador, at Revolution Palace in Havana, Cuba, Sunday, May 8, 2022.

Associated Press

López Obrador said Friday that the summit was still being analyzed and that "we want everyone to be invited."

"We have a very good relationship with President Biden," he said, adding that "we have been in talks." □

# Veteran Miami DEA agents charged in bribery conspiracy

By JOSHUA GOODMAN  
and JIM MUSTIAN  
Associated Press

A current U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration agent and a former supervisor in the agency were charged Friday with leaking confidential law enforcement information to defense lawyers in Miami in exchange for \$70,000 in cash.

A five-count indictment unsealed in New York charges the agent, John Costanzo Jr., with accepting bribes to provide sensitive information about pending investigations to Manny Recio, a former Miami supervisor who retired from DEA more than two years ago to work as a private investigator for area defense attorneys. Federal prosecutors allege Recio sought the information to help recruit new clients.

Using a burner phone that Recio purchased for Costanzo, the two men allegedly coordinated unlawful searches of criminal databases, helped DEA targets mislead federal investigators and concealed payments made with the knowledge of the suspects' defense attorneys.

Proceeds for the scheme were allegedly used by Costanzo to repair his Porsche, purchase airline tickets and make a \$50,000 down payment on a condominium.

"Make it look good. This



This June 13, 2016, file photo shows Drug Enforcement Administration agents in Florida.

Associated Press

is thirty grand right here," Recio told Costanzo in a 2019 recorded phone call in which the two discussed a draft submission to prosecutors on behalf of one target, according to court documents.

An attorney for Recio did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Costanzo's attorney, Marc L. Mukasey, said in an email that "the theory of this case is misguided and he will be vindicated."

The charges are the latest black eye for the DEA, which has been beset by repeated misconduct scandals that have landed a growing list of former

agents behind bars. Just last week, another former DEA agent in Arkansas was sentenced to more than 11 years in prison for taking thousands of dollars in bribes from a drug trafficker. The case has also sent a chill through South Florida's close-knit, fiercely competitive narco-defense circles because of Recio's strong ties to federal law enforcement and the high-paid, private-sector lawyers.

"The conduct alleged in the indictment violates the core duty of law enforcement officers to protect and serve the public, rather than to use their access to sensitive information to en-

rich themselves," Manhattan U.S. Attorney Damian Williams said in a statement. In interviews with FBI agents in 2019, Costanzo and Recio both denied ever exchanging anything of value as part of the alleged scheme.

Such actions would have been a flagrant violation of the DEA's standards of conduct. The FBI wiretapped Recio for at least three months while he worked in his post-retirement job as a private investigator for defense lawyers.

As part of the shady dealings, he at one point wrote a \$2,500 check to a company co-owned by an un-

named member of Costanzo's family, according to court documents. The payment appears to have been used by Costanzo to repair a Porsche he owned, according to an email exchange about the vehicle between the DEA agent and an unnamed defense attorney from the tony Miami suburb of Coral Gables with whom Recio was working with as a private investigator.

In 2019, the same family member received \$50,000 from a company owned by a local Florida police detective who also isn't named. The funds were used by Costanzo for a down payment on a condominium, according to the indictment.

In addition to running database checks, Costanzo allegedly assisted Recio in his work with another Miami-area attorney representing a charged defendant. When prosecutors learned that the defendant had deleted information from his cell phone, Costanzo allegedly suggested that he mislead investigators by falsely claiming that he had deleted the information because he didn't want the government to see naked photos of his wife.

Recio's defense attorney, Phil Reizenstein, previously told AP that Recio's work on cases had been "impeccable." □

## Recaptured Alabama escapee ordered to provide DNA sample

**FLORENCE, Ala. (AP)** — A capital murder suspect who authorities say went on the lam for 10 days with the help of an Alabama jail official was ordered to provide a DNA sample to prosecutors.

Lauderdale County District Judge Carole C. Medley did not cite a reason why the sample was needed from Casey White, but she approved the state's request in an order Wednesday, records show.

White, who is being held at a state prison after being recaptured in Indiana last week, must provide

the sample by Friday or "as soon as practicable," Medley said, and a defense lawyer can observe the process.

White was charged with escape after leaving the Lauderdale County jail in a patrol car driven by Vicky White, the assistant corrections director. Casey White surrendered after being cornered in Evansville, Indiana, and Vicky White, 56, died of a gunshot wound that a coroner determined was self-inflicted.

An attorney for Casey White has not commented publicly since the arrest

and did not oppose the request for a DNA sample, made in the escape case. But the prisoner's mother said she doubts her son knew about the escape until Vicky White came to take him from jail for a supposed mental evaluation April 29.

White is scheduled to go on trial in June on a capital murder charge in the slaying of Connie Ridgeway in 2015, although a delay is possible.

Authorities said the man confessed to the killing in 2020 while in prison for other crimes. □



Escaped inmate Casey White arrives at the Lauderdale County Courthouse in Florence, Ala., after waiving extradition in Indiana Tuesday, May 10, 2022

Associated Press

# Canada bans China's Huawei Technologies from 5G networks

By ROB GILLIES

Associated Press

**TORONTO (AP)** — Wireless carriers in Canada won't be allowed to install Huawei equipment in their high-speed 5G networks, the Canadian government said Thursday, joining allies in banning the giant Chinese technology company.

Canada had been the only member of the Five Eyes intelligence-pooling alliance not to bar or restrict use of equipment from Huawei Technologies Co. Ltd. in its 5G networks. The U.S. and the other members Britain, Australia and New Zealand previously banned Huawei.

"We are announcing our intention to prohibit the inclusion of Huawei and ZTE products and services in Canada's telecommunications systems," Industry Minister François-Philippe Champagne said.

Canada's ban also includes ZTE Corp., one of China's biggest tech companies and one that is state-owned.

Champagne added that "providers who already have this equipment in-



A woman wearing a face mask walks past a Huawei store temporarily closed due to coronavirus-related restrictions in Beijing, Thursday, May 12, 2022.

Associated Press

stalled will be required to cease its use and remove it." He said Canada's wireless companies won't be offered compensation.

Canada's major wireless companies already had started working with other providers.

"There are many hostile actors who are ready to exploit vulnerabilities in our defenses," Public Safety

Minister Marco Mendicino said. Mendicino said the government did an extensive review and is redoubling efforts to protect Canadians.

China condemned the move against one of its national champions as a form of "political manipulation" carried out in coordination with the U.S., which was aimed at "suppress-

ing" Chinese companies in violation of free market principles. "China will comprehensively and seriously evaluate this incident and take all necessary measures to safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese companies," the Chinese Embassy in Canada said in a statement posted on its website.

China commonly employs

such language in commercial disputes, which often does not lead to a firm response from Beijing.

The U.S. government has been lobbying allies like Canada for years to exclude Huawei from new ultra-fast 5G mobile networks over worries that China's communist rulers could compel the company to help with cyberespionage. The U.S. has warned it would reconsider intelligence sharing with any countries that use Huawei gear. The company has repeatedly denied the allegations.

"We're disappointed but not surprised. We're surprised it took the government so long to make a decision," Huawei spokesman Alykhan Velshi said. "We see this as a political decision, one born of political pressure primarily from the United States."

Velshi said there will be Huawei equipment in Canada for years to come. He said the company has over 1,500 employees in Canada and two-thirds of them work in research and development. □

# Japan welcomes new U.S. Indo-Pacific economic initiative

By MARI YAMAGUCHI

Associated Press

**TOKYO (AP)** — Japan welcomes a new U.S. economic initiative for the Indo-Pacific that President Joe Biden is expected to roll out during a visit to Tokyo next week because it

demonstrates American commitment to a regional economic order that is not just about market access, an official said Friday.

Biden is proposing the new Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, or IPEF, as an alternative to the Trans-

Pacific Partnership which the United States dropped out of in 2017 under former President Donald Trump. Japan played a key role in bringing together the other 11 members of that pact, now known as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.

While details of the new initiative are still to be discussed in Tokyo, Japan has already expressed its support and says it is considering joining.

Noriyuki Shikata, Cabinet secretary for public affairs, said the IPEF is expected to focus more on supply chains and economic security than on issues in traditional trade agreements such as market access and tariffs.

"My understanding is that IPEF and TPP are different," Shikata said at a news con-

ference in Tokyo.

"Japan still wishes to see the U.S. come back to the TPP, and the reason we say so is because TPP and IPEF are different," he said. "We are hoping this IPEF will lead to ... a more proactive engagement of the United States in the Indo-Pacific economic order."

The U.S. government has been trying to engage more with countries in the region. The framework, which was only announced Tuesday, is still in its early stages and further details are unclear.

Shikata said it was not known if IPEF will be discussed during the Quad summit, a four-nation regional security framework Tokyo is hosting Tuesday, when leaders from Australia and India will join Japan and the United States.

South Korea, under new

President Yoon Suk Yeol, who is more willing to build closer ties with Tokyo and Washington, is also seen as interested in joining the Quad.

Asked about that possibility, Shikata said: "The Quad means four countries and we don't have any plans to change that name. So at this time we are focused on promoting practical cooperation among the four countries."

The four Quad nations share concerns over China's growing assertiveness in the region and its increasingly capable armed forces, and stress the importance of a "free and open" Indo-Pacific to strengthen a free, democratic and rules-based order in the region. China views the grouping as a part of a U.S.-led push to impede its economic and political rise. □



Noriyuki Shikata, cabinet secretary for public affairs of Kishida's government, gets introduced before he speaks in a news briefing in Tokyo, Friday, May 20, 2022.

Associated Press

# Dutch leader faces pressure over old-school text messages

By **MOLLY QUELL**

**Associated Press**

**THE HAGUE, Netherlands**

**(AP)** — The long-serving Dutch prime minister is in hot water over his low-tech cell phone.

Mark Rutte is facing unusual political and public pressure after revelations that he has been deleting text messages about official matters for years. Critics accuse him of concealing state activity but he says the messages just took up too much space in his years-old Nokia phone.

Rutte survived a no-confidence vote in parliament on Thursday over the deleted text messages, but opposition parties are calling for further inquiry. Questions have also surfaced over whether his use of the old phone might have jeopardized national security. In investigating the government's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, Dutch newspaper De Volkskrant discovered that Rutte had been regularly deleting texts from his Nokia 301



**Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte, left, appears to remove the sim card from his smartphone as he waits for the arrival of German Chancellor Olaf Scholz in The Hague, Netherlands, Thursday, May 19, 2022.**

for years. The daily newspaper noticed messages were missing from an official records request and, following a lawsuit, Rutte revealed that he immediately deleted messages he deemed unimportant, forwarding the remainder for

an official archive. Messages that were missing include one from Amsterdam Mayor Femke Halsema regarding a Black Lives Matter protest in June 2020 where attendance was ten times higher than expected, and a message from

Unilever CEO Paul Polman regarding a controversial tax issue.

Rutte, now in his fourth term and among the EU's longest-serving leaders, has been using his Nokia 301 for years for communication, though he also has an

iPhone, which he says he only uses to read the news. The prime minister denies any wrongdoing.

"I have kept to the letter, but also the spirit of the law from A to Z," he said during the heated parliamentary debate.

He has long been criticized for his secrecy, holding that discussions between government officials shouldn't be publicly available. Rutte tries to limit official business to phone calls or face-to-face meetings where no notes are taken.

Written communication, including text messages, can be disclosed to journalists under the Open Government Act, while phone calls are not required to be recorded.

A government lawyer initially claimed Rutte needed to delete the messages because of a shortage of storage space on the phone, but Rutte later said it was because the phone was slow if too many messages were kept in the inbox. □

# U.N. nuclear agency chief: Fukushima transparency important

By **MARI YAMAGUCHI and HARUKA NUGA**

**Associated Press**

**TOKYO (AP)** — The chief of the International Atomic Energy Agency stressed the importance of transparency on Friday after visiting the tsunami-wrecked Fukushima nuclear power plant, where he observed preparations for the release of treated radioactive wastewater that has prompted concerns inside and outside Japan.

Rafael Grossi, the director general of IAEA, which is assisting Japan's plan to start releasing the wastewater into the sea next year, said his agency will help maintain transparency throughout the process.

Grossi is meeting with officials to discuss the plan, which has received international attention. On Thursday he visited the Fukushima Daiichi plant, where he observed its on-

going decommissioning and preparations for the wastewater discharge.

Japan's government says disposal of the water, stored in hundreds of large tanks, is necessary for the plant's cleanup and decommissioning to move forward.

Grossi touched on lingering concerns in Japan and

in neighboring countries about possible health hazards from the release of the wastewater, which includes tritium, a byproduct of nuclear power production that is inseparable from the water and a possible carcinogen at high levels.

"I proceed from the principle that every serious honest concern must be

taken seriously and every effort must be made to address it," he said. "For these countries, any countries, what they have every right to demand is that the international standards are complied with, nothing more, nothing less."

Grossi stressed that the IAEA's role is to ensure that measures taken at the plant are fully in line with international standards that have been accepted by those expressing concerns. China and South Korea have fiercely opposed the plan.

Local fishing communities say the release will hurt the reputation of their catch because the wastewater also contains other isotopes such as cesium and strontium, which will be reduced way below legal limits, but not to zero.

Japan's government has faced repeated public criticism for minimizing any risk

from the wastewater. Last year, the reconstruction agency had to remove a video which portrayed tritium as a cute cartoon character swimming in a glass of water.

Japan's nuclear regulator this week approved a plan by the plant's operator, Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings, to release the water, saying radiation risks to the environment were minimal.

A massive earthquake and tsunami in 2011 destroyed the Fukushima plant's cooling systems, causing three reactor cores to melt and release large amounts of radiation.

Water that is being used to cool the damaged reactor cores, which remain highly radioactive, has since leaked into the reactor basements, where it is contained, collected and stored in tanks. □



**Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Rafael Grossi speaks during a news conference at the Japan National Press Club in Tokyo, Friday, May 20, 2022.**

**Associated Press**

# U.S. lawmakers urge binding vote on Puerto Rico status

By DÁNICA COTO

Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP)

— A group of mostly Democratic congress members, including the House majority leader, on Thursday proposed a binding plebiscite to decide whether Puerto Rico should become a state or gain some sort of independence.

The draft proposal unveiled at an online news conference would commit Congress to accepting Puerto Rico into the United States if voters on the island approve it. But even if the plan were to pass the Democratic-led House, the proposal appears to have little chance in the Senate, where Republicans have long opposed statehood.

Voters also could choose outright independence or independence with free association, whose terms would be defined following negotiations over foreign affairs, U.S. citizenship and use of the U.S. dollar, said Rep. Darren Soto of Florida. If no majority emerges, a second round of voting would be held between the top two alternatives.

The measure, not yet introduced, follows months of negotiations between federal lawmakers who have



The Puerto Rican flag flies in front of Puerto Rico's Capitol as in San Juan, Puerto Rico, July 29, 2015. Associated Press

long disagreed on what Puerto Rico's political status should be. "Getting to this point has not been an easy process. Is it perfection? No," said Rep. Raúl Grijalva of Arizona, chairman of the U.S. House Natural Resources Committee, which oversees affairs in U.S. territories. U.S. House Majority Leader Rep. Steny Hoyer of Maryland said all those involved had to make compromises, but he pledged to push the bill through. The bill has

the support of Jennifer González, Puerto Rico's congressional representative and a Republican who has limited voting powers. Puerto Rico has held seven unilateral, nonbinding referendums on the issue, but this would be the first that would not include possible continuation of the current status as a U.S. commonwealth. No overwhelming majority for or against statehood emerged in earlier referendums. The last was

held during the November 2020 general elections, with 53% of votes for statehood and 47% against, with only a little more than half of registered voters participating. mAs a U.S. territory, Puerto Ricans have U.S. citizenship but are not allowed to vote in general elections; they have a congressional representative with limited voting powers, and they receive less money from certain federal programs than do people in U.S. states.

"Nobody can deny that the current status of Puerto Rico is undemocratic," said Gov. Pedro Pierluisi, whose New Progressive Party has long pushed for the island to become the 51st U.S. state. The main opposition Popular Democratic Party, which supports the status quo, rejected the proposed plebiscite because it does not include Puerto Rico's current political status. "This project excludes those who think differently," said party president José Luis Dalmau, who is also president of Puerto Rico's Senate and vowed to fight the proposal. "This is a lack of respect."

Meanwhile, backers said the next step is to hold public hearings in Puerto Rico on the proposed bill prior to its introduction. If eventually approved, Pierluisi said the plebiscite would be held on Nov. 5, 2023.

The proposal comes at a time when Puerto Rico is trying to emerge from a lengthy bankruptcy and recover from the devastation left by Hurricane Maria in 2017.

There is also growing discontent with Puerto Rico's two main parties and ongoing government corruption scandals. □

## Nicaraguan bishop fasts to protest police harassment

MEXICO CITY (AP) — A Roman Catholic bishop in Nicaragua began an "indefinite fast" Friday inside a church to protest increasing harassment from national police, who he said followed him throughout the entire previous day.

Rolando Álvarez, the bishop of Matagalpa and a fierce critic of President Daniel Ortega's government, said in a video published by his diocese that police had even breached his "circle of family privacy" while he visited a niece.

Ortega's government arrested dozens of political opposition leaders, including most of the potential candidates, in the months

before his re-election to a fourth consecutive term last year. His government has shut down dozens of nongovernmental organizations that he accuses of working on behalf of foreign interests to destabilize his government. Tens of thousands of Nicaraguans have been chased into exile. The Catholic church remains influential, but has not escaped Ortega's wrath. He has accused its priests of being "terrorists and coup plotters" and blamed them for participating in his "failed overthrow."

Álvarez was one of the bishops who supported demonstrators in massive street

protests that broke out in April 2018 and became a call for Ortega to step down. Since then, Álvarez's sermons often criticize the government and demand the release of political prisoners.

"Today I have been followed all day by the Sandinista police, since the morning through these hours of the night, at every moment, during all of my day's movements," Álvarez said in the video Thursday night.

Álvarez said he confronted his pursuers and was told they were just "following orders." Rather than back down, the police followed him into the night "putting



Rolando Álvarez, Bishop of Matagalpa, attends a press conference regarding the Roman Catholic Church's agreeing to act as "mediator and witness" in a national dialogue between members of civil society and the government in Managua, Nicaragua, May 3, 2018.

Associated Press

at risk the safety of my family." That was when he decided to shelter in a church in the southeast of the capital Managua and begin his fast.

The bishop said he would fast until the police in-

formed church leaders they would respect the privacy of his family. "The insecurity of this country is precisely the police, those who make us feel unsafe with that persecution," he said. □

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### How it all began

It was 1938 when Mr. Eric Ponson started his journey at General Store. Ponson did not hesitate and decided to buy General Store. Buying a store and thus going from employee to owner of a business with a debt of 11.000 guilders was not an easy task.

As the saying goes: "Behind every successful man, is a strong woman". In the case of Ponson, this was no different. As General Store progressed and slowly became successful, Mrs. Irene Ponson, came in to assist her husband. Irene Ponson is a visionary, she knew exactly where and how to invest and within a short amount of time in 1970, General Store moved to a better location at the Steenweg. This allowed for a lot more merchandise, products and employees. Supply and demand was as such, that General Store became the number 1 electrical business. Business kept going so well that the location at the Steenweg became too small and was moved later to Dakota Shopping Paradise and later to Pedro Gallego Straat. With this move, an expansion was decided upon and an electronics store in Savaneta was opened. General Store still being very successful was ready for more growth.

Ricky, Kenneth, Corine and Frans are the fruits of this marriage. Kenneth and Frans however, decided to further develop their father's legacy and continued with their mother's dream to expand the business. An expansion not in square feet only, but in merchandise as well. A great opportunity presented itself when the Ponson family was able to buy a piece of property across from the airport. In 2007 the Ponson family moved into their brand new and huge building. Ponson's General Store now had an electrical department, a housewares department, a paint department and a hardware department.

After a successful opening and expansion, Kenneth and Frans who inherited their mothers vi-



sion, decided that General Store was ready for yet another expansion. With the support of Mr. Tom Barfell and management of Do it Best in the States, the construction of Do it Center commenced.

Fast forward to today. A Do it Center in Aruba, with more than 50.000 top of the line items for interior as well exterior use, building materials, STO products and a top of the line grocery store. Perseverance, responsibility, vision and the courage to invest have made Ponson's General Store as successful as it is today.

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Located in Shaba, Noord. This is the last sibling of the Do It Center family. Here you will be able to find anything you are looking for. The building is divided into several departments from home to hardware to groceries. Everything under one roof.

Groceries? Visit the fully stocked supermarket with fresh fruits and vegetables and high class meat selections. Highly known products and brands are here for you to grab. Every week Do It Center Groceries offers you great discount on selected items. Weekly specials are very popular and a perfect chance for you to buy your favorite products at a reduced price.

Need a home makeover? Do not skip the furniture department "Leenbakker". Here, you will find a divine collection of European furniture, worldwide known for their modern and stylish features for your bedroom, bathroom, living room or kitchen. For your garden they have a wide selection of durable furniture specially made for our tropical climate. Take a walk around and find some treasures. Find the perfect accessory for your house, fitted for your personality and style. Modern, elegant, retro industrial, whatever your style is you will definitely find something for your personal taste.

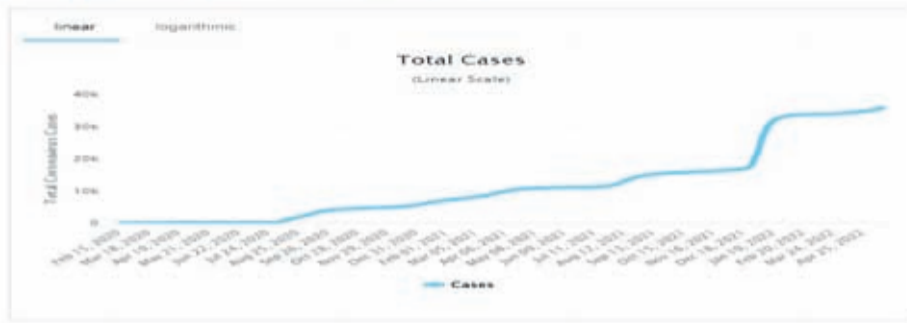
Feeling hungry? Take a break and relax at the 'Deli'. Savor a delicious lunch or a sandwich with a cup of coffee or perhaps a wrap. If you are a sweet tooth you will not be able to just skip the great variety of desserts they have. So tempting!

Do it Center Shaba is open from Monday to Saturday from 8AM to 8PM and on Sunday's from 9AM to 6PM.

For more information go to [www.doit.aw](http://www.doit.aw). □

## Weekly update on the development of COVID-19 has been published with the recovery of 609 people

Total Coronavirus Cases in Aruba



**ORANJESTAD - Directie Volksgezondheid, also known as DVG, publishes weekly updates on the development of COVID-19 here on the Island.**

In this week's update, the public

health agency reported that this week, 609 people recovered from coronavirus, and a total of 623 new cases were registered.

The amount of active cases for COVID-19 for today is of 295 and

the amount of death caused by or related to COVID-19 is at 213.

This data illustrates that the new COVID-19 cases have a weekly average of 89 positive cases a day, along with a weekly positivity rate

of 39% per day.

Currently, Aruba has 4 people hospitalized because or for reasons related to COVID-19, of which all is in general care. □

Active Cases in Aruba



## Honoring of a loyal visitor at Marriott Ocean Club

**EAGLE BEACH** □ Recently, Aruba Tourism Authority representative Marouska Heyliger had the great pleasure in honoring many loyal Aruba visitors with their distinctive certificates. These certificates are a way to say "Masha Danki" for continuously choosing Aruba as a favorite vacation destination. The titles are as following: 10+ years "Distinguished Visitor", 20+ years "Goodwill Ambassador" and 36+ years "Emerald Ambassador".

The honorees are Chris and Ellen Kodack, residents of New York, who have been honored as Distinguished Visitors.

The symbolic honorary title is presented on behalf of the Minister of

Tourism, as a token of appreciation to the guests who visit Aruba between the 10-20-35 and more consecutive year mark. The wonderful visitors loves coming to the Island for All the new friends she has made over the past 20 years, the beaches and beautiful water, the weather and always perfect facilities, amazing restaurants and the friendly, helpful and fun people of Aruba.

Heyliger together with the representatives of Marriott Ocean Club presented the certificates to the honorees, handed over some presents and also thanked them for choosing Aruba as their favorite vacation destination and as their home-away-from-home. □



## Aruba to Me

**ORANJESTAD -We would like to portrait you! By inviting you to send us your favorite vacation picture while enjoying our Happy Island. Complete the sentence: Aruba to me is .....**

Send your picture with that text (including your name and where you are from) to: [news@arubatoday.com](mailto:news@arubatoday.com) and we will publish your vacation memory. Isn't that a special way to keep your best moments alive?

For today we have our lovely visitors Gina and Jerry Schneider from New

Smyrna Beach, Florida who wrote to us saying, "We love Aruba for so many reasons and one of them is to celebrate life. We come here to celebrate birthdays and anniversaries and build wonderful memories. Aruba to me means celebrating the magical moments of life and savoring the Island life."

Thank you to our esteemed visitors for sharing with us what Aruba means to them.

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# A bear market is hitting Wall Street. Here's what that means

By **STAN CHOE** and **ALEX VEIGA**  
AP Business Writers

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Investors on Wall Street need a place to hide.

The stock market's skid this year has pulled the S&P 500 within the grasp of what's known as a bear market. Rising interest rates, high inflation, the war in Ukraine and a slowdown in China's economy have caused investors to reconsider the prices they're willing to pay for a wide range of stocks, from high-flying tech companies to traditional auto-makers.

The last bear market happened just two years ago, but this would still be a first for those investors that got their start trading on their phones during the pandemic. For years, thanks in large part to extraordinary actions by the Federal Reserve, stocks often seemed to go in only one direction: up. Now, the familiar rallying cry to "buy the dip" after every market wobble is giving way to fear that the dip is turning into a crater. Here are some common questions asked about bear markets:

## WHY IS IT CALLED A BEAR MARKET?

A bear market is a term used by Wall Street when an index like the S&P 500, the Dow Jones Industrial Average, or even an individual stock, has fallen 20% or more from a recent high for a sustained period of time.

Why use a bear to represent a market slump? Bears hibernate, so bears represent a market that's retreating, said Sam Stovall, chief investment strategist at CFRA. In contrast, Wall Street's nickname for a surging stock market is a bull market, because bulls charge, Stovall said.

The S&P 500 index was down 1.9% in Friday afternoon trading, putting it 20.3% below its high set on Jan. 3.

For many investors, the bear market would become official if the S&P 500, Wall Street's main barometer of health, finishes the

day at least 20% down from its peak.

The Nasdaq is already in a bear market, down 31%

better returns.

Earlier this month, the Fed signaled additional rate increases of double the usual

vestors less willing to pay elevated prices for stocks, which are riskier than bonds, when bonds are

stocks have provided over the long term.

While dumping stocks would stop the bleeding, it would also prevent any potential gains.

Many of the best days for Wall Street have occurred either during a bear market or just after the end of one. That includes two separate days in the middle of the 2007-2009 bear market where the S&P 500 surged roughly 11%, as well as leaps of better than 9% during and shortly after the roughly monthlong 2020 bear market.

Advisers suggest putting money into stocks only if it won't be needed for several years.

The S&P 500 has come back from every one of its prior bear markets to eventually rise to another all-time high. The down decade for the stock market following the 2000 bursting of the dot-com bubble was a notoriously brutal stretch, but stocks have often been able to regain their highs within a few years.

## HOW LONG DO BEAR MARKETS LAST AND HOW DEEP DO THEY GO?

On average, bear markets have taken 13 months to go from peak to trough and 27 months to get back to breakeven since World War II. The S&P 500 index has fallen an average of 33% during bear markets in that time.

The biggest decline since 1945 occurred in the 2007-2009 bear market when the S&P 500 fell 57%.

History shows that the faster an index enters into a bear market, the shallower they tend to be.

Historically, stocks have taken 251 days (8.3 months) to fall into a bear market. When the S&P 500 has fallen 20% at a faster clip, the index has averaged a loss of 28%.

The longest bear market lasted 61 months and ended in March 1942 and cut the index by 60%.

It took less than three weeks for stocks to rise 20% from their low in March 2020. □



Pedestrians walk by the New York Stock Exchange, Wednesday, May 18, 2022 in New York.

Associated Press

from its peak of 16,057.44 on Nov. 19. The Dow Jones Industrial Average is more than 16% below its most recent peak.

The most recent bear market for the S&P 500 ran from February 19, 2020 through March 23, 2020. The index fell 34% in that one-month period. It's the shortest bear market ever.

## WHAT'S BOTHERING INVESTORS?

Market enemy No. 1 is interest rates, which are rising quickly as a result of the high inflation battering the economy. Low rates act like steroids for stocks and other investments, and Wall Street is now going through withdrawal.

The Federal Reserve has made an aggressive pivot away from propping up financial markets and the economy with record-low rates and is focused on fighting inflation.

The central bank has already raised its key short-term interest rate from its record low near zero, which had encouraged investors to move their money into riskier assets like stocks or cryptocurrencies to get

amount are likely in upcoming months. Consumer prices are at the highest level in four decades, and rose 8.3% in April compared with a year ago.

The moves by design will slow the economy by making it more expensive to borrow. The risk is the Fed could cause a recession if it raises rates too high or too quickly.

Russia's war in Ukraine has also put upward pressure on inflation by pushing up commodities prices. And worries about China's economy, the world's second largest, have added to the gloom.

## SO, WE JUST NEED TO AVOID A RECESSION?

Even if the Fed can pull off the delicate task of tamping down inflation without triggering a downturn, higher interest rates still put downward pressure on stocks.

If customers are paying more to borrow money, they can't buy as much stuff, so less revenue flows to a company's bottom line. Stocks tend to track profits over time.

Higher rates also make in-

vestors suddenly paying more in interest thanks to the Fed.

Critics said the overall stock market came into the year looking pricey versus history. Big technology stocks and other winners of the pandemic were seen as the most expensive, and those stocks have been the most punished as rates have risen.

But the pain is spreading widely, with shares of Target and other retailers slumping hard this week after reporting weaker-than-expected profits.

Stocks have declined almost 35% on average when a bear market coincides with a recession, compared with a nearly 24% drop when the economy avoids a recession, according to Ryan Detrick, chief market strategist at PL Financial.

## SO I SHOULD SELL EVERYTHING NOW, RIGHT?

If you need the money now or want to lock in the losses, yes. Otherwise, many advisers suggest riding through the ups and downs while remembering the swings are the price of admission for the stronger returns that

# CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

**ACROSS** 40 French

1 Imam's caps place

7 Leg part

11 Kindle

12 Egg

outline

13 Tennis

star Nadal

14 Circle

dance

15 Mixes

16 Raucous

bird

17 Get

news of

18 Generic

19 Bible twin

21 Performed

22 DiMaggio

nickname

25 Birdie

beater

26 Choir

voice

27 Glowing

coals

29 Complain

33 Too

trusting

34 Comic's

forte

35 Allude to

36 Flood

37 Bakery

worker

38 Wipes out

39 Titled

woman

**DOWN**

1 Coot's

home

2 Make an

address

3 Bulgaria's

capital

4 Argument

5 Calls on

6 Moray or

conger

7 "Over

There!"

writer

8 Guaca-

mole base

9 University

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Yesterday's answer

10 Imperfect

16 Hop atop

18 Finger

features

20 Long

look

22 Reggae's

birthplace

23 Went

around

24 Funny

spot

25 Schoolbag

item

28 More

than

some

30 Tickle

31 Man of

many

words

32 Printer's

need

34 On this

spot

36 Cotillion

girl

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39					40					

5-21

AXYDLBAAXR  
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

5-21

**CRYPTOQUOTE**

J M K B S P N F K K B B K P J S D F

S P N W K O S K P J Y E N Y Y O

Q D P P K W B S B D B K P B S J S C K

D V D W K P K B B Y E J M K E K K F S P N B

Y E Y J M K W B — K Q S F U L Y B J

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: FORGIVENESS IS THE FRAGRANCE THE VIOLET SHEDS ON THE HEEL THAT HAS CRUSHED IT. — MARK TWAIN



In this photo released by Warner Bros., talk show host Ellen DeGeneres appears with guest Oprah Winfrey during a taping of "The Ellen DeGeneres Show" at the Warner Bros. lot in Burbank, Calif., on April 26, 2022, scheduled to air on May 24.

Associated Press

## Ellen DeGeneres: proud of what she, daytime TV show achieved

By LYNN ELBER

AP Television Writer

**LOS ANGELES (AP)** — Ellen DeGeneres relishes what her daytime show has given viewers in its nearly two-decade run, a blend of the silly, sometimes earnest and, particularly in the last few years, a respite from hard times.

She's also acknowledges that who she is counts for a lot — a TV host with wide appeal who is lesbian and married but would like to see the distinction rendered moot.

"It shouldn't be any different than someone who has a talk show who's a heterosexual person. But it does mean something, and I am proud of that. I'm really thankful," DeGeneres said.

She decided it was time to end "The Ellen DeGeneres

Show" after 19 years and, before she dances off the daytime stage, is celebrating with high-profile guests. Among them: Jennifer Lawrence, Mila Kunis and Bruno Mars, with Jennifer Aniston, Billie Eilish and Pink on the Thursday, May 26, finale.

With taping recently concluded, DeGeneres could heed the advice offered by another famous ex-talk show host and her friend, Oprah Winfrey, who's on the episode airing Tuesday. Winfrey suggested to DeGeneres that she take time off.

Will she?

"Define 'time off,'" DeGeneres said, wryly. She's busy with one of her passions, remodeling houses, and will travel to Rwanda to visit an impressive birthday present from her ac-

tor-wife, Portia de Rossi: The recently completed Ellen DeGeneres Campus of the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund, a sprawling headquarters for the gorilla conservation project named for the late scientist.

DeGeneres has production deals in place and "ideas I want to do," said the actor and comedian who's been part of movies ("Mr. Wrong," "Finding Dory") and TV series, including her groundbreaking 1990s sitcom "Ellen," the first network show with a gay or lesbian lead character.

Sarah Kate Ellis, president and CEO of the media advocacy group GLAAD, saluted DeGeneres' contribution then and now.

Her legacy "is rooted in being one of most influential pioneers in the entertainment industry when it comes to LGBTQ visibility," Ellis said in an email.

DeGeneres has invited viewers "to get to know and understand LGBTQ youth, transgender people, and in doing so, she reminded millions of people that our community still faces many challenges and inequalities." □

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## Elon Musk visits Brazil's Bolsonaro to discuss Amazon plans



Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro arrives to a resort hotel where he is expected to meet with Elon Musk in Porto Feliz, Brazil, Friday, May 20, 2022.

Associated Press

By **DIANE JEANTET**  
Associated Press

**RIO DE JANEIRO (AP)** — Tesla and SpaceX chief executive officer Elon Musk met with Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro on Friday to discuss connectivity and other projects in the Amazon rainforest.

The meeting, held in a luxurious resort in Sao Paulo state, was organized by Communications Minister Fábio Faria, who has said he is seeking partnerships with the world's richest man to bring or improve internet in schools and health facilities in rural areas using technology developed by SpaceX and Starlink, and also to preserve the rainforest.

"Super excited to be in Brazil for launch of Starlink for 19,000 unconnected schools in rural areas & environmental monitoring of Amazon," Musk tweeted Friday morning.

Illegal activities in the vast Amazon rainforest are monitored by several institutions, such as the national space agency, federal police and environmental regulator Ibama.

But deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon has surged under Bolsonaro, reaching its highest annual rate in more than a decade, according to official data from the national space agency. Bolsonaro's critics say he is largely to blame,

having emboldened loggers and land grabbers with his fervent support for development of the region. During the event, Bolsonaro said the region was "really important" to Brazil.

"We count on Elon Musk so that the Amazon is known by everyone in Brazil and in the world, to show the exuberance of this region, how we are preserving it, and how much harm those who spread lies about this region are doing to us," he said.

Bolsonaro and Musk appeared in a video transmitted live on the president's Facebook account, standing together on a stage and answering questions

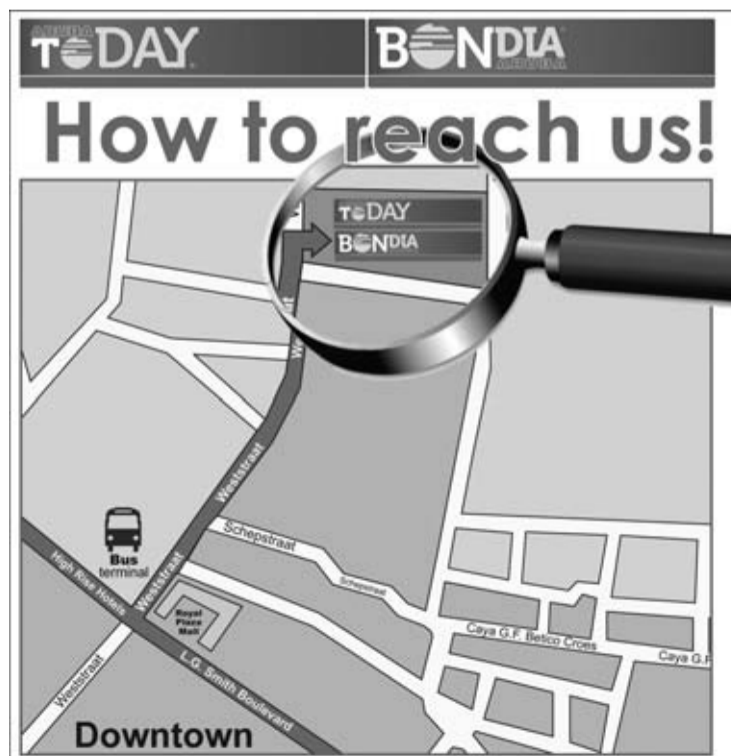
from a group of students. "A lot can be done to improve quality of life through technology," Musk told the crowd. Although none of the students asked about Musk's prospective purchase of Twitter, Bolsonaro said that it represented a "breath of hope."

"Freedom is the cement for the future," he said, calling the billionaire a "legend of freedom." Musk has offered to buy Twitter for \$44 billion, but said this week the deal can't go forward until the company provides information about how many accounts on the platform are spam or bots.

Like Musk, Bolsonaro has

sought to position himself as a champion of free speech and opposed the deplatforming of individuals including his ally, former U.S. President Donald Trump.

The meeting with Bolsonaro occurs just five months before the far-right leader will seek a second term in a hotly anticipated election. □



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## Justin Thomas sets the target in the wind at Southern Hills

By DOUG FERGUSON

AP Golf Writer

**TULSA, Okla. (AP)** — One last birdie in a strong Oklahoma wind gave Justin Thomas another 3-under 67 and set a daunting target for Rory McIlroy and everyone else Friday in the PGA Championship.

Trees were swaying and flags were whipping from the opening tee shot, and rounds in the 60s were scarce at Southern Hills.

That didn't stop Thomas, who leaned on creativity with the shape of his shots, even on the putting green. He dropped only one shot from a bunker on the par-3 14th and finished his solid round with a 10-foot birdie putt.

That put him at 6-under 134, one shot ahead of Rory McIlroy, who was making his way to the first tee shortly after Thomas finished.

McIlroy and Tiger Woods faced what typically are tougher conditions in the afternoon, though the forecast was for the wind to die. Jon Rahm, who fought

back with a 69, wasn't buying it.

"They said the wind was going to go down this afternoon. No, it's not. It's Oklahoma," Rahm said. "It's going to stay just as windy as we had."

Thomas can only hope that's the case. The heritage of Southern Hills is that all seven of its major champions — three in the U.S. Open, four in the PGA — have had at least a share of the 36-hole lead.

"If I maintain the lead, I hope that trend continues," Thomas said.

Of those who played Friday morning, Thomas had a three-shot lead over Matt Fitzpatrick (69), who has never won in America but seems to play his best the tougher the conditions.

The only other players from that early group who finished two rounds under par were Oklahoma native Talor Gooch, who had 16 pars, one birdie, one bogey in a round of 70; Joaquin Niemann of Chile (71) and Bernd Wiesberger of



Justin Thomas hits from the fairway on the 18th hole during the second round of the PGA Championship golf tournament at Southern Hills Country Club, Friday, May 20, 2022, in Tulsa, Okla. Associated Press

Austria (67). They were at 1-under 139.

McIlroy was in the same group as Woods and Jordan Spieth, one of them trying to stay near the top, the other two hopeful of making it to the weekend. Woods opened with a 74, which was looking to be around the cut line.

Thomas was not trending all that well coming into the only major he has won, the 2017 PGA at Quail Hollow. He has gone 14 months

without winning. He was not feeling his best earlier in the week, a combination of a virus infection and allergies.

All that has changed on a course he only saw for the first time last week when he joined Spieth for a practice round.

He opened with a pair of short birdies on No. 10 and the par-5 13th, with a tough par along the way that illustrated the effect of the wind. From 50 feet away

on the 12th green, he sent the putt well out to the right and let the wind push it back toward the hole. He still had 6 feet and made that for par.

Thomas holed a 25-foot birdie on the par-5 fifth and closed out his round with his fourth birdie. He gave respect to every shot, even putts that ordinarily would have been treated like tap-ins. "Although I played solid yesterday, I played really, really well today," Thomas said. "The conditions were obviously very difficult. I stayed very patient, tried to get in my own little world and get in a zone and just tried to execute each shot the best I could."

"I'm glad to have a good round to show for it."

The strength of the wind could have a big effect on who sticks around for the weekend. Masters champion Scottie Scheffler three-putted for double bogey on No. 9 to cap a 75 that left him at 6-over 146 and very much in danger of missing the cut. □

## Bardet pulls out of Giro d'Italia, Démare claims third win

**CUNEO, Italy (AP)** — Romain Bardet pulled out of the Giro d'Italia due to a stomach bug on Friday before French cyclist Arnaud Démare claimed his third victory in this year's race.

Bardet, who was among the overall title favorites and lying fourth overall, climbed off his bike about a third of the way into the 13th stage and got into a Team DSM car. Shortly afterward, the team confirmed his abandonment. Bardet suffered from a stomach bug the previous day and was seen holding his stomach in pain at the beginning of Friday's stage in San Remo.

He was only 14 seconds behind leader Juan Pedro López overall, and was expected to be the main challenger to favorite Richard Carapaz. Bardet had been in great form, finishing first in the Tour of the Alps last month and almost winning atop the Blockhaus

on the Giro ninth stage on Sunday.

"He slept the whole way back in the bus after the race. He didn't eat last night, he couldn't eat anything. He was awake all night being sick," Team DSM coach Matt Winston said. "This morning there was a small chance he could finish today but Romain's a fighter. He wanted

to start the stage, he wanted to go for it. But he was already being sick in the neutral and it just wasn't possible to continue."

The 150-kilometer (93-mile) stage to Cuneo was expected to be a final one for the sprinters but for a long time it appeared as if it was going to be won from a breakaway. However, the sprinters' teams worked

hard to drive the peloton and the four escapees were swallowed up with just 700 meters to go.

That set up the final sprint, and Démare managed to head off Phil Bauhaus and Mark Cavendish.

"When I got here I was saying it would be nice to win one ... I'm really happy," said Démare, who rides for Groupama-FDJ. "It was an incredible day. They really resisted at the front."

"We were really riding hard and with 10 kilometers to go I started to think about the sprint because we knew we'd get them by then and the guys did a great job. It was monstrous actually the leadout ... and I did a big strong sprint."

The breakaway got away early in the stage and the four escapees built a lead of more than six minutes at the summit of the Colle di Nava, the only classified climb of the day — a steep, third-category ascent in

the first half of the route.

It appeared as if the peloton let the breakaway gain too much time on the climb as the quartet worked well together to keep the pack distanced, but it was to end in heartbreak for the four riders, each of whom was looking for a first grand tour stage win. López maintained his 12-second lead over Carapaz and João Almeida, and will wear the pink jersey for a 10th day on Saturday's 14th stage. It is the shortest one of the race at just 147 kilometers (91 miles) but includes two ascents of the Maddalena and the Superga hill in a challenging two-lap circuit in the second half of the undulating route from San Remo to Torino.

"I need to enjoy, like, every day," López said. "For sure, some guys will try to make a difference but I will try to do my 100%."

The Giro finishes in nine days in Verona. □



France's Arnaud Démare, second left, crosses the finish line as he wins the 13th stage of the Giro D'Italia cycling race from Sanremo to Cuneo, Italy, Friday, May 20, 2022.

Associated Press

## Near-record heat for Preakness another test for Epicenter

By STEPHEN WHYNO

AP Sports Writer

**BALTIMORE (AP)** — Epicenter lost the Kentucky Derby because of a hot pace.

Now he'll face hot temperatures in the Preakness.

Two weeks after getting passed by 80-1 long shot Rich Strike just before the finish line at the Derby, Epicenter goes into Saturday's Preakness as the favorite and clearly the class of the nine-horse field. In a race without Rich Strike and no chance at a Triple Crown, there is still some buzz largely because of filly Secret Oath and that it will be a test of whether Epicenter can beat the heat that could approach a record high. "You handle what you have control over and put yourself in the best position possible and try to eliminate as many variables that could get in the way of that," Epicenter trainer Steve Asmussen said. "If it's actually 95, 96 degrees here, and we know it can be pretty sticky when it gets warm in Baltimore, so I think that all of them are going to have to deal with that."

"He's a big horse turning back in 14 days, so just make sure he's drinking plenty of water and hydrated, just like your kids."

The National Weather Service is forecasting a high of 94 degrees Fahrenheit (34.4 Celsius) for Saturday afternoon, with just a slight dip before the 7:01 p.m. EDT post time for the 147th running of the Preakness. The record is 96, set in 1934 when High Quest won the race. Epicenter is the morning line 6-5 favorite to join that list of Preakness winners after finishing a tough-luck second in the Derby. Even after owner Rick Dawson decided not to run Rich Strike at Pimlico Race Course to take a swing at an unlikely Triple Crown, his upset at Churchill Downs was still the talk of the week, especially for those around the horse who was cruising to victory until he wasn't.

"Even my 6-year-old after the race, he looked at me and said, 'Daddy, Epicenter ran the best race,'" Epicenter owner Ron Winchell



Preakness entrant Epicenter, left, the runner up in the Kentucky Derby horse race, leaves the track after a workout ahead of the Preakness Stakes Horse Race race at Pimlico Race Course, Wednesday, May 18, 2022, in Baltimore.

Associated Press

said. "He ran a great race, so the confidence level is great. But with any big race, you just hope you show up and run, and so I think if he shows up and runs, we're in a good position."

Kenny McPeck, who won the 2020 Preakness with filly Swiss Skydiver, called Epicenter "definitely the horse to beat" and said the favorite would likely need to regress for his grey 10-1 shot Creative Minister to finish first. But he and co-majority owner Greg Back felt confident enough to pony up \$150,000 to enter him in the race.

McPeck told Back if Creative Minister won his race on the Derby undercard, "We'll run him anywhere you want to run him — the moon if you want." He was fast enough to show evidence he belonged in the company of the other Preakness horses.

"What is it Wayne Gretzky said? You never make a shot you don't take," McPeck said. "That's the fun of the sport. ... If you feel like you've got a legitimate chance to just hit the

board, you can't be scared because a lot happens."

A lot would have to happen for 50-1 long shot Fenwick to pull off another Triple Crown shocker and slightly less for 30-1 Happy Jack, who finished 14th in the Derby, or 20-1 Skippylongstocking to win the \$1.65 million, 1 3/16-mile Preakness. There's plenty of respect for the chances of 6-1 Simplification, who was fourth in the Derby, as well as 7-2 second choice on the morning line Early Voting. But the most chatter around the Preakness is about Secret Oath, the winner of the Kentucky Oaks, who 86-year-old Hall of Fame trainer D. Wayne Lukas is betting can beat the boys. Absent the Derby winner — the fourth consecutive year there's no real chance at a Triple Crown at the Preakness — the focus is on the filly in what Lukas called an otherwise vanilla race.

"If you don't have the filly in here, the mood is zilch," said Lukas, who is going for a record-tying seventh Preakness victory. "The filly made this at least have a

little bit of interest."

McPeck was glad it felt like "old times" at the Preakness, especially after it was run in October two years ago with no fans in the stands. He fondly recalled his first trip to Baltimore in 1995, when Lukas was in his heyday.

"I've put a few miles on since then and a few belt loops are missing and I've shaved my head since then, but Wayne's still here," McPeck said. "Where's Bob?"

Bob, of course, is two-time Triple Crown-winning trainer Bob Baffert, whose absence at Pimlico is jarring after years in the spotlight. Currently serving a suspension in Kentucky for medication violations that's being honored by Maryland and other states, he wasn't allowed to enter horses in the Derby or Preakness.

But he does have a presence in 12-1 late entry Armagnac, whom Baffert trained and saddled in three races before transferring him to former assistant Tim Yakteen. After Taiba finished 12th and Messier 15th in the Derby with Baffert's shadow hanging over the

race, there's less pressure this time. "I'm trying to get under the radar," Yakteen said. "I enjoyed the Derby. I wish we would've had a different outcome."

Winchell, Asmussen and Epicenter jockey Joel Rosario feel the same way after turning for home under the twin spires at Churchill Downs thinking they'd won the Kentucky Derby.

"That was very, very exciting at that point," Rosario said. "What can I say? The horse had run really well. It would've been really great if we could've won that, but that's how it goes sometimes."

Concerned about the heat and disappointed he's not getting another opportunity to beat Rich Strike, Asmussen isn't worried about positioning at the Preakness as long as Epicenter is "in front at the wire." He shares his owner's confidence but is a bit more wary about expressing it after the crushing Derby defeat.

"It was, I believe, the longest shot on the board that actually won the race," he said, "so you can't count anybody out." □

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